



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

October 20, 2005

ICE AGENTS SEIZE MORE THAN 1764 LBS. OF COCAINE AT THE PORT OF ST CROIX

ST CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands -Special agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) and officers of the U.S. Virgin Island Police Department discovered 1764.4 pounds of cocaine hidden within the walls of the British-flagged vessel S/V Gio, a 49-foot sailboat that was docked at the Port of St. Croix.



The S/V Gio was intercepted by the United States Coast Guard (USCG) on May 11th following a routine patrol off the coast of Anguilla. At that time, the vessel along with its crewmen, were escorted to the Port of St. Thomas after officers of the USCG discovered 411 pounds of cocaine on board the vessel.

The vessel, which will be auctioned, was being inspected once again by federal agents and local officers when they discovered the additional contraband.

The crewmen, Jose Ganuza, a citizen of Spain and Andrea Mauro, a citizen of Italy, have been in U.S. Marshals custody since their arrest in May. They are currently detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico pending their trial.

“For many years the lesser Antilles archipelago has been the preferred route narcotics smugglers to bring their contraband into the United States; however, the presence of ICE in this geographical area has changed that dramatically,” said Lydia St. John-Mellado, special agent-in-charge of ICE in San Juan, Puerto Rico. “We are shutting down this route and with it, a vulnerability that once existed in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.”

The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of the U.S. Virgin Islands is handling the prosecution of the case.

The public is reminded that a criminal complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial and the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.